

THE YEAR'S PROGRESS IN ARMY NURSING

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WITH the permission of the Surgeon-General I have the honor herewith to submit for your information a short report of my work, and at the same time to bespeak your help and interest in all that pertains to it, as well as to ask you for any suggestions for its perfecting which may occur to you, either as you sit in council or later as individuals.

About a year ago the Honorable the Secretary of War entered into a policy of radical retrenchment in all branches of the service. The Medical Department did not escape, but was made to feel the practical effect of such a policy in regard to its surgeons, nurses, and hospital corps. The number of nurses in three years has been reduced from two hundred and fifty to one hundred, which it must not exceed for the present.

Were all the hospitals where members of the corps are serving in the United States it would be a comparatively simple matter to get on with the allowed number, because so little time would be lost in transfers from one place to another. The enormous distance to the Philippines and the time required to traverse it greatly complicates the situation. The commanding officers of the various hospitals are constantly clamoring for more nurses, which we are unable to supply. On all sides these gentlemen say no commendation can be too high for the work done by the nurses, and to you ladies, as their teachers and exemplars, all this credit belongs.

The position of the nurses and their recognition in army circles grows more and more satisfactory month by month. In the Philippines social courtesies are accepted and returned between officers and their wives and the nurses. A special invitation is always sent to the Nurses' Quarters by Governor and Mrs. Taft for all functions at the Government House, and there have been occasions when both were the guests of the nurses.

During the late meeting of the Spanish-American War Nurses in San Francisco a reception was given them by the members of the Army

* Read at the meeting of the American Society of Superintendents of Training-Schools for Nurses, Pittsburg, October, 1903.

Nurse Corps on duty at the General Hospital in that city. The commanding officer made the address of welcome. The Chief Surgeon and hospital staff were guests, also the British Consul-General. Besides this the commanding officer rendered every possible assistance in entertaining the guests during their stay.

Such incidents are in sharp contrast to the days when the nurses were socially ignored and only professionally endured as a questionable good.

The most notable achievement of the year is the accomplishment of the long-desired change in the transport regulations—assigning nurses to the saloon mess after the medical officers. Some of the chiefs of the various departments to which the matter was “respectfully referred for remark” fought it, but that matters little, as we won.

As their superintendents, ladies, you have every reason to be proud, as I am, of the showing of your pupils, and of the place they have made for themselves in the face of many adverse circumstances and conditions. These things have been accomplished solely and only because of their professional excellence and their personal attributes of character and heart. They uniformly express themselves in personal letters to me as a well-satisfied and happy body of women.

There are still a few things which I desire and hope to get for them, notably two:

1. Some modification by Congress of the present law in re of their subsistence, so that it will be unnecessary for them to contribute from their salary to have their table what it should be.

2. That when circumstances are such, from pressure of work in the hospital, that they cannot be given their annual leave, this may become cumulative. With these points gained I cannot see much left to be desired from the nurses' standpoint.

From the point of view of the Medical Department we look forward to the completion of the big General Hospital here in Washington, where all nurses will enter and serve for a certain term, and where perhaps in time the Medical Department might even have its own army training-school.

Great improvements are in progress in two of the general hospitals in the United States,—*i.e.*, the one devoted exclusively to the treatment of pulmonary tuberculosis at Fort Bayard, N. M., and the large General Hospital at the Presidio of San Francisco.

At the former an expenditure of one hundred thousand dollars has been authorized. Most of the cases at this hospital are ambulant, but there is an infirmary where those who are running a temperature or who need more than general care are placed. This is to be doubled in size

and capacity, and there is to be a new hospital for officers. A medical storehouse, crematory, receiving vault, morgue, and laboratory are to be built. The reservoir supplying the hospital with water is to be enlarged. Five portable houses are to be put up and used for officers' quarters. Other buildings are to be built as needed.

The nurses here, of whom there are twelve, have a house by themselves with every comfort and convenience, and a most excellent mess without any cost to them.

At the Presidio there are thirty-eight nurses on permanent duty, with pretty, comfortable quarters in a wing of the hospital used only by them. They pay into their mess two or three dollars a month—more than they ought.

At this hospital there is to be a new operating-pavilion, with as fine an operating-room as can be built.

There will be under this roof surgeons' dressing-rooms, sterilizing kitchens, anæsthetizing-rooms, recovery-rooms, and a room for the preparation of dressings. All floors will be tiled, all walls and ceiling coarstone finish, all angles rounded.

The walls of the operating-room will have door casings and a wainscoting of marble six feet high. They are to be tiled to the ceiling. The room will be lighted by a large skylight of corrugated glass. It is estimated the building will cost only twenty-five dollars less than twenty thousand dollars.

Thus you see our nurses have the advantage of service under all conditions, from those approved as the latest and best for the wonderful aseptic surgery of the day, to the outposts where ingenuity, training, and intelligence must make the most of simple appliances and the best of unfavorable conditions.

I cannot close without making a sincere acknowledgment of our indebtedness to those among you who have helped us to select this noble body of women. Appointments are never made other than in accordance with the recommendations of the superintendent under whom the applicant was trained, and the value of these papers to the office of the Surgeon-General is beyond computation. The information thus secured is never, under any circumstances, given out, so I feel I may ask for a continuance of these favors, and that the reports on these blanks should be made as full as possible. Without these our work would be at a standstill.

I am enclosing a little tabulated memorandum on the date of this writing of the nurses and their stations for anyone who may care to see it.

Of the Navy Nurse Bill we as yet hear nothing.



SIMPLE DEVICE TO PREVENT SLIPPING

UNITED STATES.

SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA.

Assigned to regular duty	36
En route for regular duty	3
	— 39
Fort Bayard, N. M.	12
Fort McDowell, Cal. (Hospital Corps School of Instruction)	1
Home awaiting discharge	3
Total in United States	55

PHILIPPINE ISLANDS.

First Reserve Hospital, Manila	32
Corregidor Island, Luzon	5
Iloilo, Panay	5
En route to Philippine Islands, sailed October 1	3
Total in Philippine Islands	45
	100

SIMPLE DEVICES FOR THE COMFORT OF PATIENTS

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THERE are no patients who complain of discomfort more than those who, on account of dyspnoea, must remain in bed in a sitting posture.

While the head-rest may be utilized to maintain this sitting posture, such cases are difficult to manage on account of the tendency to slip towards the foot of the bed.

To prevent this slipping it is common usage to put a pillow at the feet, but this not only keeps the feet uncomfortably warm, but it is clumsy and completely demoralizes the appearance of the bed.

A simple method of overcoming the difficulty is here illustrated. A sheet folded diagonally is securely fastened to the sides of the bed, thus forming a loop against which the feet rest, a suitable pad or folded sheet laid therein making it more comfortable.

Another simple contrivance for accomplishing the same end is the use of a rubber-covered pillow, doubled upon itself and placed under the buttocks. Through the fold a muslin bandage is slipped and the ends tied to the head of the bed. This device will be specially useful with children and patients too restless to keep the feet in the sling.

Children in extension likewise require some support to maintain their position in bed, and those engaged in orthopaedic nursing will find that a neatly folded towel around the waist, with a muslin bandage slipped through it in the back and tied to the head of the bed, will successfully counteract the tendency to slip.